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Promotion and protection of the rights of children

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The girl child

The General Assembly,

Recalling its resolution 60/141 of 16 December 2005 and all relevant resolutions, including the agreed conclusions of the Commission on the Status of Women, in particular those relevant to the girl child,

Reaffirming the equal rights of women and men as enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations,

Recalling all human rights and other instruments relevant to the rights of the child, in particular the girl child, including the Convention on the Rights of the Child[1] and the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women[2] and their Optional Protocols,

[1] United Nations, *Treaty Series*, vol. 1577, No. 27531.
[2] Ibid., vol. 1249, No. 20378.

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Welcoming the fact that the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities[3] is open for signature, particularly as it explicitly recognizes the specific situation of girls with disabilities,

Reaffirming the internationally agreed development goals, including the Millennium Development Goals, as well as the commitments relevant to the girl child made at the 2005 World Summit,[4]

Reaffirming also the outcome document of the twenty-seventh special session of the General Assembly on children, entitled "A world fit for children",[5] the Declaration of Commitment on HIV/AIDS adopted at the twenty-sixth special session of the General Assembly on HIV/AIDS, entitled "Global Crisis — Global Action",[6] and the 2006 Political Declaration on HIV/AIDS,[7]

Reaffirming further all other relevant outcomes of major United Nations summits and conferences relevant to the girl child, as well as their five- and ten-year reviews, including the Beijing Declaration[8] and Platform for Action[9] adopted at the Fourth World Conference on Women, the outcome of the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly entitled "Women 2000: gender equality, development and peace for the twenty-first century",[10] the Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development,[11] and the Programme of Action of the World Summit for Social Development[12] and the declaration adopted in 2005 by the Commission on the Status of Women at its forty-ninth session,[13]

Reaffirming the Dakar Framework for Action adopted at the World Education Forum in 2000,[14]

Welcoming the report of the independent expert for the United Nations study on violence against children[15] and the in-depth study of the Secretary-General on all forms of violence against women,[16] and takes note of the recommendations contained therein,

Recognizing that eradicating poverty is the greatest global challenge facing the world today and an indispensable requirement for sustainable development, in particular for developing countries, and recognizing also that chronic poverty

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[3] Resolution 61/106, annex.

[4] See resolution 60/1.

[5] Resolution S-27/2, annex.

[6] Resolution S-26/2, annex.

[7] Resolution 60/262, annex.

[8] *Report of the Fourth World Conference on Women, Beijing, 4-15 September 1995* (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.96.IV.13), chap. I, resolution 1, annex I.

[9] Ibid., annex II.

[10] Resolution S-23/2, annex, and resolution S-23/3, annex.

[11] *Report of the International Conference on Population and Development, Cairo, 5-13 September 1994* (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.95.XIII.18), chap. I, resolution 1, annex.

[12] *Report of the World Summit for Social Development, Copenhagen, 6-12 March 1995* (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.96.IV.8), chap. I, resolution 1, annex II.

[13] See *Official Records of the Economic and Social Council, 2005, Supplement No. 7* and corrigendum (E/2005/27 and Corr.1), chap. I, sect. A.

[14] See United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, *Final Report of the World Education Forum, Dakar, Senegal, 26-28 April 2000* (Paris, 2000).

[15] See A/62/209.

[16] A/61/122 and Add.1 and Add.1/Corr.1.

remains the single biggest obstacle to meeting the needs of and protecting and promoting the rights of children and that urgent national and international action is therefore required to eliminate it,

Recognizing also that girl children are often at greater risk of being exposed to and encountering various forms of discrimination and violence, and reaffirming the need to achieve gender equality to ensure a just and equitable world for girls, including through partnering with men and boys, as an important strategy for advancing the rights of the girl child,

Recognizing further that the empowerment of girls is essential in breaking the cycle of discrimination and violence and in promoting and protecting the full and effective enjoyment of their human rights, and that empowering girls requires the active support and engagement of their parents, legal guardians, families, boys and men, as well as the wider community,

Deeply concerned about discrimination against the girl child and the violation of the rights of the girl child, which often result in less access for girls to education, nutrition and physical and mental health care, in their enjoying fewer of the rights, opportunities and benefits of childhood and adolescence than boys, in leaving them more vulnerable than boys to the consequences of unprotected and premature sexual relations and in their often being subjected to various forms of cultural, social, sexual and economic exploitation and to violence, abuse, rape, incest and honour-related crimes and harmful traditional practices, such as female infanticide, early marriage, forced marriage, prenatal sex selection and female genital mutilation,

Deeply concerned also that female genital mutilation is an irreparable, irreversible harmful practice that affects more than one hundred and thirty million women and girls alive today and that each year a further two million girls are at risk of undergoing the harmful procedure,

Deeply concerned further that, in situations of poverty, war and armed conflict, girl children are among those most affected and furthermore become the victims of sexual violence, abuse and exploitation and sexually transmitted diseases, including HIV/AIDS, which have a serious impact on the quality of their lives and leave them open to further discrimination, violence and neglect, thus limiting their potential for full development,

Emphasizing that increased access to education, including in the areas of sexual and reproductive health, for young people, especially girls, dramatically lowers their vulnerability to preventable diseases, in particular HIV/AIDS infection and sexually transmitted diseases,

Concerned by the increasing number of child-headed households, in particular those headed by orphan girls, including those orphaned by the HIV/AIDS pandemic,

Deeply concerned that early childbearing and limited access to sexual and reproductive health care, including in the area of emergency obstetric care, causes high levels of obstetric fistula and maternal mortality and morbidity,

Convinced that racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance reveal themselves in a differentiated manner for women and girls and can be among the factors leading to a deterioration in their living conditions, poverty, violence, multiple forms of discrimination and limitation or denial of their human rights,

Welcoming the holding of the commemorative high-level plenary meeting on children on 11 and 12 December 2007,

1. *Stresses* the need for full and urgent implementation of the rights of the girl child as provided to her under human rights instruments, and urges States to consider signing, ratifying or acceding to the Convention on the Rights of the Child[1] and the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women[2] as a matter of priority;

2. *Urges* States to consider signing, ratifying, or acceding to the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women[17] and the Optional Protocols to the Convention on the Rights of the Child;[18]

3. *Calls upon* States to consider signing, ratifying or acceding to the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and the Optional Protocol thereto;[19]

4. *Urges* all States that have not yet signed and ratified or acceded to the Convention concerning Minimum Age for Admission to Employment, 1973 (Convention No. 138), and the Convention concerning the Prohibition and Immediate Action for the Elimination of the Worst Forms of Child Labour, 1999 (Convention No. 182), of the International Labour Organization to consider doing so;

5. *Urges* all Governments and the United Nations system to strengthen efforts bilaterally and with international organizations and private-sector donors in order to achieve the goals of the World Education Forum,[14] in particular that of eliminating gender disparities in primary and secondary education by 2005, which have not been fully met, and to implement the United Nations Girls' Education Initiative as a means of reaching this goal, and calls for the implementation of and reaffirms the commitments contained in the United Nations Millennium Declaration,[20] particularly those related to education;

6. *Calls upon* States and the international community to recognize the right to education on the basis of equal opportunity and non-discrimination by making primary education compulsory and available free to all children, ensuring that all children have access to education of good quality, as well as making secondary education generally available and accessible to all, in particular through the progressive introduction of free education, bearing in mind that special measures to ensure equal access, including affirmative action, contribute to achieving equal opportunity and combating exclusion, and ensuring school attendance, in particular for girls and children from low-income families;

7. *Calls upon* all States to take measures to address the obstacles that continue to affect the achievement of the goals set forth in the Beijing Platform for Action,[9] as contained in paragraph 33 of the further actions and initiatives to implement the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action,[21] where appropriate,

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[17] United Nations, *Treaty Series*, vol. 2131, No. 20378.

[18] Ibid., vol. 2171, No. 27531, and vol. 2173, No. 27531.

[19] Resolution 61/106, annexes I and II.

[20] See resolution 55/2.

[21] Resolution S-23/2, annex.

including the strengthening of national mechanisms to implement policies and programmes for the girl child and, in some cases, to enhance coordination among responsible institutions for the realization of the human rights of girls, as indicated in the further actions and initiatives;

8. *Stresses* the importance of a substantive assessment of the implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action with a lifecycle perspective so as to identify gaps and obstacles in the implementation process and to develop further actions for the achievement of the goals of the Platform for Action;

9. *Calls upon* all States and international and non-governmental organizations, individually and collectively, to implement further the Beijing Platform for Action, in particular the strategic objectives relating to the girl child, and the further actions and initiatives, and to mobilize all necessary resources and support in order to achieve the goals and strategic objectives and actions set out in the Beijing Declaration[8] and Platform for Action;

10. *Urges* States to improve the situation of girl children living in poverty, deprived of nutrition, water and sanitation facilities, with no access to basic health-care services, shelter, education, participation and protection, taking into account that while a severe lack of goods and services hurts every human being, it is most threatening and harmful to the girl child, leaving her unable to enjoy her rights, to reach her full potential and to participate as a full member of society;

11. *Also urges* States to ensure that the applicable requirements of the International Labour Organization for the employment of girls and boys are respected and effectively enforced and that girls who are employed have equal access to decent work, equal payment and remuneration, are protected from economic exploitation, discrimination, sexual harassment, violence and abuse in the workplace, are aware of their rights and have access to formal and non-formal education, skills development and vocational training, and further urges States to develop gender-sensitive measures, including national action plans where appropriate, to eliminate the worst forms of child labour, including commercial sexual exploitation, slavery-like practices, forced and bonded labour, trafficking and hazardous forms of child labour;

12. *Urges* all States to promote gender equality and equal access to basic social services, such as education, nutrition, health care, including in the areas of sexual and reproductive health, vaccinations and protection from diseases representing the major causes of mortality, and to mainstream a gender perspective in all development policies and programmes, including those relating to children as well as those specific to the girl child;

13. *Also urges* all States to enact and enforce legislation to protect girls from all forms of violence and exploitation, including female infanticide and prenatal sex selection, female genital mutilation, rape, domestic violence, incest, sexual abuse, sexual exploitation, child prostitution and child pornography, trafficking and forced migration, forced labour and early and forced marriage, and to develop age-appropriate safe and confidential programmes and medical, social and psychological support services to assist girls who are subjected to violence and discrimination;

14. *Urges* States to formulate comprehensive, multidisciplinary and coordinated national plans, programmes or strategies to eliminate all forms of discrimination and violence against women and girls, which should be widely

disseminated and should provide targets and timetables for implementation, as well as effective domestic enforcement procedures through the establishment of monitoring mechanisms involving all parties concerned, including consultations with women's organizations, giving attention to the recommendations relating to the girl child of the Special Rapporteurs of the Human Rights Council on violence against women, its causes and consequences and on trafficking in persons, especially women and children, of the Secretary-General in his in-depth study on violence against women[16] and of the independent expert for the United Nations study on violence against children;[15]

15. *Also urges* States to ensure that the right of children to express themselves and participate in all matters affecting them, in accordance with their age and maturity, is fully and equally enjoyed by girls;

16. *Further urges* States to involve girls, including girls with special needs, and their representative organizations, in decision-making processes, as appropriate, and to include them as full and active partners in identifying their own needs and in developing, planning, implementing and assessing policies and programmes to meet those needs;

17. *Recognizes* that a considerable number of girl children are particularly vulnerable, including orphans, children living on the street, internally displaced and refugee children, children affected by trafficking and sexual and economic exploitation, children living with HIV and AIDS, children who are incarcerated and children who live without parental support, and therefore urges States, with the support of the international community, where relevant, to take appropriate measures to address the needs of such children by implementing national policies and strategies to build and strengthen governmental, community and family capacities to provide a supportive environment for such children, including by providing appropriate counselling and psychosocial support, and ensuring their enrolment in school and access to shelter, good nutrition and health and social services on an equal basis with other children;

18. *Encourages* States to promote actions, including through bilateral and multilateral technical cooperation and financial assistance, for the social reintegration of children in difficult situations, in particular girls, considering, inter alia, the views, skills and capacities that those children have developed in the conditions in which they have lived and, where appropriate, with their meaningful participation;

19. *Urges* all States and the international community to respect, protect and promote the rights of the girl child, taking into account the particular vulnerabilities of the girl child in pre-conflict, conflict and post-conflict situations, and urges States to take special measures for the protection of girls, in particular to protect them from sexually transmitted diseases, such as HIV/AIDS, gender-based violence, including rape, sexual abuse and sexual exploitation, torture, abduction and forced labour, paying special attention to refugee and displaced girls, and to take into account their special needs in the delivery of humanitarian assistance, disarmament, demobilization and rehabilitation assistance and reintegration processes;

20. *Deplores* all cases of sexual exploitation and abuse of women and children, especially girls, in humanitarian crises, including those cases involving humanitarian workers and peacekeepers, and urges States to take effective measures

to address gender-based violence in humanitarian emergencies and to make all possible efforts to ensure that their laws and institutions are adequate to prevent, promptly investigate and prosecute acts of gender-based violence;

21. *Also deplores* all acts of sexual exploitation, abuse and trafficking of women and children by military, police and civilian personnel involved in United Nations operations, welcomes the efforts undertaken by United Nations agencies and peacekeeping operations to implement a zero-tolerance policy in this regard, and requests the Secretary-General and personnel-contributing countries to continue to take all appropriate action necessary to combat these abuses by such personnel, including through the full implementation without delay of measures adopted in the relevant General Assembly resolutions based on recommendations of the Special Committee on Peacekeeping Operations;[22]

22. *Calls upon* Governments, civil society, including the media, and non-governmental organizations to promote human rights education and full respect for and the enjoyment of the human rights of the girl child, inter alia through the translation, production and dissemination of age-appropriate and gender-sensitive information material on those rights to all sectors of society, in particular to children;

23. *Requests* the Secretary-General, as Chairman of the United Nations System Chief Executives Board for Coordination, to ensure that all organizations and bodies of the United Nations system, individually and collectively, in particular the United Nations Children's Fund, the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, the World Food Programme, the United Nations Population Fund, the United Nations Development Fund for Women, the World Health Organization, the United Nations Development Programme, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees and the International Labour Organization, take into account the rights and the particular needs of the girl child in country programmes of cooperation in accordance with national priorities, including through the United Nations Development Assistance Framework;

24. *Requests* all human rights treaty bodies and the human rights mechanisms of the Human Rights Council, including the special procedures, to adopt regularly and systematically a gender perspective in the implementation of their mandates and to include in their reports information on the qualitative analysis of violations of the human rights of women and girls, and encourages the strengthening of cooperation and coordination in that regard;

25. *Requests* States to ensure that, in all policies and programmes designed to provide comprehensive HIV/AIDS prevention, treatment, care and support, particular attention and support is given to the girl child at risk, infected with and affected by HIV/AIDS, including pregnant girls and young and adolescent mothers, as part of the global effort to scale up significantly towards achieving the goal of universal access to comprehensive prevention, treatment, care and support by 2010;

26. *Invites* States to promote initiatives aimed at reducing the prices of antiretroviral drugs, especially second-line drugs, available to the girl child, including bilateral and private sector initiatives as well as initiatives carried out on a

[22] See *Official Records of the General Assembly, Fifty-ninth Session, Supplement No. 19* (A/59/19/Rev.1).

voluntary basis by groups of States, including those based on innovative financing mechanisms that contribute to the mobilization of resources for social development and those that aim to provide further access to drugs at affordable prices to developing countries on a sustainable and predictable basis, and in this regard takes note of the International Drug Purchase Facility;

27. *Calls upon* all States to integrate food and nutritional support with the goal that children, especially girl children, at all times have access to sufficient, safe and nutritious food to meet their dietary needs and food preferences, for an active and healthy life, as part of a comprehensive response to HIV/AIDS and other communicable diseases;

28. *Urges* States and the international community to increase resources at all levels, particularly in the education and health sectors, to enable young people, especially girls, to gain the knowledge, attitudes and skills that they need to prevent HIV/AIDS and early pregnancy and to enjoy the highest attainable standard of physical and mental health, including sexual and reproductive health;

29. *Urges* States, the international community, the relevant United Nations entities, civil society and international financial institutions to continue to actively support, through the allocation of increased financial resources, targeted innovative programmes that address ending female genital mutilation, to develop and provide education programmes and sensitization workshops on the dire consequences for the health of the girl of this harmful practice and to provide for those who perform the harmful procedure training programmes so that they may adopt an alternative profession;

30. *Calls upon* States to strengthen the capacity of national health systems, and in this regard calls upon the international community to assist national efforts, including by allocating adequate resources, to provide essential services needed to prevent obstetric fistula and to treat those cases that occur by providing the continuum of services, including family planning, prenatal and post-natal care, skilled birth attendants, emergency obstetric care and post-partum care, to adolescent girls, including those living in poverty and in underserved rural areas where obstetric fistula is most common;

31. *Calls upon* States and the international community to create an environment in which the well-being of the child is ensured, inter alia, by cooperating, supporting and participating in global efforts for poverty eradication at the global, regional and country levels, recognizing that strengthened availability and effective allocation of resources are required at all levels, in order to ensure that all the internationally agreed development and poverty eradication goals, including those set out in the United Nations Millennium Declaration, are realized within their time framework, and reaffirming that investments in children and the realization of their rights are among the most effective ways to eradicate poverty;

32. *Requests* the Secretary-General to submit a report to the General Assembly at its sixty-fourth session on the implementation of the present resolution, with an emphasis on ending female genital mutilation, using information provided by Member States, the organizations and bodies of the United Nations system and non-governmental organizations, with a view to assessing the impact of the present resolution on the well-being of the girl child.